

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration of this application, as amended, is respectfully requested.

The withdrawal of the previous rejection is appreciated, as is the allowance of Claims 12 and 13. Claims 18-20, which were merely objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, have not been written in independent form, because, as will appear hereinafter, base Claim 15 should be allowed.

Claim 1 has been amended to recite tubes rather than tube portions. Budwig, the principal reference relied upon in the rejection of Claim 1, does not disclose tubes, but only arcuate tongues that are interdigitated. There are no inner and outer tubes in Budwig.

Kasai, the secondary reference relied upon in the rejection of Claim 1, does not disclose inner and outer tubes. See the Remarks on pages 4-5 of the Amendment dated June 24, 2003.

Accordingly, no proper combination of the teachings of Budwig and Kasai would support the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a). Claim 1 and the claims dependent thereon should be allowed. Some of the dependent claims have been amended for consistency with the amendment of base Claim 1.

Dependent Claims 7, 8, and 10 have also been amended to clarify the location of the annular concavities, but the amendment of these claims is not required to overcome their rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a). It should be noted that the shallow channel 11 in Budwig is around the outer surfaces of the tongues 3 adjacent the ring members 2 and is not in a flange.

Claim 15 and dependent Claims 17, 18, and 21 have been amended to delete "portion" and to recite a tube or tubes. Claim 15 has also been amended to recite that the flange of the female grommet has an annular concavity therein surrounding the tube of that grommet and facing one side of the mat engaged by the flange of that grommet. A similar amendment has been made in Claim 17 with regard to the male grommet.

The amendment of Claim 15 and claims dependent thereon clarifies the invention intended to be claimed and was not required to overcome the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a). Neither grommet of Budwig has a flange with an annular concavity as recited in Claim 15, and Budwig does not disclose a mat sandwiched between concavities of grommets, as recited in Claim 17. The deficiencies of

Budwig are not cured by the secondary references, Kasai and Bailey.

Accordingly, this application is now clearly in condition for allowance.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge to Deposit Account No. 50-1165 any fees under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 and 1.17 that may be required by this paper and to credit any overpayment to that Account. If any extension of time is required in connection with the filing of this paper and has not been requested separately, such extension is hereby requested.

Respectfully submitted,

NHS:lat:jb

Miles & Stockbridge P.C.  
1751 Pinnacle Drive  
Suite 500  
McLean, Virginia 22102  
(703) 903-9000

By: Nelson H. Shapiro  
Nelson H. Shapiro  
Reg. No. 17,095

August 5, 2003